

# Asthma Medications

## Quick Relief vs. Controller Medications

There are a lot of asthma medications, and it is often difficult to tell what each one does. Depending on what your doctor prescribes, some may come as a liquid, powder an inhaler, and/or pills. They all work together to fight the major signs of asthma--tightening and swelling of the airways. Generally, asthma medicine fall into two categories: quick relief and controller. Ask a doctor or pharmacist if you are unsure of what your medicine does.

### Quick Relief

During an asthma attack, the muscles around the airways tighten, squeezing the airways and making it difficult for air to pass through. You may wheeze, feel tightness in the chest, or cough. The attacks can be sudden, so the medicine to treat it must act just as quickly.

Quick relief medicine acts to relax the muscles and make breathing easier. It should be taken during an attack and can take effect in about five minutes.

Quick relief medicine should be used only during an attack. When asthma is managed correctly you, should not need to use your quick relief medicine very often. If you are using this medicine more than three times a week, it could mean your asthma is out of control and a new treatment plan should be started. It is recommended you contact your doctor.

It is also recommended that quick relief medicines be taken before starting an activity involving a known trigger, such as before exercise, playing with pets, or when around dust and mold.

### Controller

Controller medicine is used to fight airway swelling and reduce mucus production to prevent attacks from occurring. It is usually taken every day. When controller medicine is effective, you should not need to use a quick relief medicine regularly. It is important to follow your doctor's orders and take the controller medicine as scheduled. You should take this medicine even when you feel well.

Remember that controllers are not to be taken for a sudden attack, but are long-term methods of controlling your asthma.

